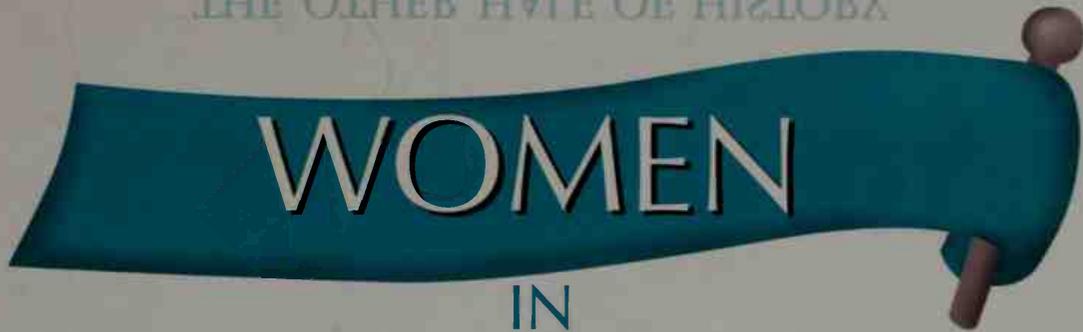


THE OTHER HALF OF HISTORY  
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IN  
PEACE & WAR  
1900-1945



Fiona Macdonald

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WOMEN  
IN  
PEACE & WAR  
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# SETTING THE SCENE

## Peace and War

Europe and America changed rapidly during the first half of the twentieth century. It was a time of war and peace, progress and disaster. Governments were strong, trade and industry were growing fast, automobiles and airplanes and other exciting scientific discoveries were being developed. But there were also revolutions, strikes and protests, sudden economic crises, and two terrible world wars. As opportunities arose, masses of women seized them, changing their lives as never before.



*I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist when I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat [opinions that show I am not a doormat].*

REBECCA WEST, ANGLO-IRISH WRITER, 1913

### A golden age?

Looking back, people often call the years 1900 to 1914 a golden age. Compared with the horrific world war that followed, in which over 10 million men died, life before 1914 was peaceful and pleasant for many in Europe and the USA. Britain, France and Germany each ruled a worldwide empire. The USA boldly and bravely claimed that it was the “land of opportunity” and the “home of the free.”

### Not for everyone

But life was not easy for everyone in this golden age. Everywhere, there was a wide gap between rich people and poor people—in income, living standards, comfort, health and even life span. In the USA, there was still racial discrimination in many states, even though slavery had been abolished in 1865. And there was no country on earth where women were equal with men.

*This woman is operating a complicated loom to weave patterned cloth. Even though she is skilled, she earns less than her male colleague. In 1900, women’s wages were always lower than men’s.*

## How wealthy women lived

In rich households, most women did not go out to work. But they still had a job to do. They were expected to make a good impression and to further their husband's career, by dressing well and socializing with people "who mattered." Just a few well-educated women worked as doctors, nurses, senior teachers and journalists.



By 1900, almost half the teachers in American primary schools were women. This class is at a school for African-American pupils in New York.

## Ordinary women

Among ordinary families, many young, unmarried women worked as domestic servants, cooking, cleaning, and caring for sick people and children. Other working-class women labored in factories, or in sweatshops (dark, crowded workrooms), or did piecework at home. Countrywomen worked on farms. Better-educated women became clerks in stores and offices, telephone operators and junior teachers. Married working-class women did two or more jobs—they were homemakers, cared for their husbands and children, and also went out to work for wages.



American heiress Jennie Jerome married a British nobleman. Their son was Winston Churchill, later Britain's famous wartime leader. Wealthy young women were expected to "catch" good husbands and make careers as wives and hostesses.

1900–1914	"Golden age" of peace and economic growth. Peak years for migration to the USA from Europe and Russia.
1914–1918	First World War
1917	Communist Revolution in Russia
1920s	Peace and rapid social change. Age of "Flappers" (liberated young women).
1930s	The Great Depression—a serious economic crisis affecting the USA, Europe, and many other lands. Rise of warlike fascist political movements in Europe.
1939–1945	Second World War.

# What Women Wanted

Throughout the nineteenth century, strong-minded women in Europe and the USA had campaigned for equality with men. They had achieved much, but in 1900, women were still not treated equally in many important areas of their lives. Women campaigners particularly wanted better pay, better conditions at work, and the right to vote.

## Dangers at work

In 1900, more women worked outside their own homes than ever before. Many women welcomed the independence this gave them from husbands and fathers, but factories and sweatshops were often dangerous places. Fingers and hair were trapped in fast-moving machinery. The air was filled with choking steam, cotton dust or dangerous chemical fumes. In Britain, the government passed laws to protect women workers from the worst of these dangers, but many women still damaged their health, or lost their lives, in factories.

*Women workers in a hatmaking factory in England, 1909. They are crowded uncomfortably close together. The air is damp, stale and full of fabric fibers, which irritate their lungs.*



*Women are one-half of the world, but until a century ago ... women lived a twilight life, a half life apart ... it was a man's world. The laws were men's laws, the government a man's government, the country a man's country. Now women have won the right to higher education and economic independence. The right to become citizens of the state is the next and inevitable consequence ... We have gone so far; we must go farther. We cannot go back.*

M. CAREY THOMAS, PRESIDENT OF BRYN MAWR  
(WOMEN'S COLLEGE), 1908



*Social reformer Emma Goldman speaking to a crowd in New York in 1916. She is campaigning for women's equality and workers' rights.*

## Unions and strikes

In 1900, American women campaigners founded the Ladies' Garment Workers Union, to demand better pay and safer conditions. They organized many strikes and protests. Women members of the National Consumers' League organized boycotts, refusing to buy goods from factories where women workers were badly treated. Even so, tragic accidents like the Triangle Shirtwaist disaster showed the shocking conditions in which many women still worked.



*The Triangle Shirtwaist factory after the fire. The factory had been designed to house as many workers and machines as possible, with no consideration for health or safety.*

## THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST DISASTER

On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out in a New York sweatshop where 500 young women worked. The fire quickly spread, as cotton waste and sewing-machine oil burst into flames. The sweatshop's owner had locked all the doors, for fear the workers would steal the shirts, and the women were trapped inside. Panic-stricken, the women jumped out of windows; 146 were killed, and many more were badly injured.

### Civil rights

In 1900 women had no political power, except in New Zealand and a few US states. Voting would allow them to choose who governed them, and to have a say in how their taxes were spent. They also wanted to serve in public office and as jurors in law courts. In 1900, women government officials seemed an impossible dream.

### 1900: Legal Rights

- In Britain and in many American states, married women had won the right to keep their own property and wages. (Before, these had belonged to their husbands.) They could also inherit a share of their husband's property when he died.
- Women were acknowledged by law to be joint guardians of their children. (Before, they had no legal right to see or care for them.)

#### HOWEVER:

- In the USA, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed equal rights only to all males, not to all citizens.

### 1900: Education and Careers

- Most girls went to school, and could read and write, but most left at 12 or 14 years old.
- Women had won the right to train as teachers, nurses, doctors and college lecturers.

#### HOWEVER:

- Women were banned from many careers, such as law, architecture, the army, police force, and the church.
- Women were often paid only half as much as men and were not given top jobs.
- Many employers forced women to stop working when they married.

# Votes for Women

“Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote,” declared President Grover Cleveland in 1905. He was wrong. Women had been demanding the vote since 1850. By the 1900s, many thousands of women were joining suffragist groups, such as the NAWSA (National American Women Suffrage Association) and the British NUWSS (National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies), to demand equal voting rights with men.



*Suffragists carrying flags in a “Wake Up America” parade in 1919. They marched through New York, demanding the right to vote.*

*We are here to claim our rights as women, not only to be free, but also to fight for freedom. It is our privilege, as well as our pride and joy, to take some part in this militant movement ...*

CHRISTABEL PANKHURST, MARCH 23, 1911

## Peaceful persuasion

In America, suffragists—often led by young, college-educated girls—went from door to door, explaining their views. They toured cities in streetcars and buses, making speeches. Crowds gathered to stare at their scandalous behavior (as respectable people saw it). These campaigners vowed that the topic of votes for women would be in the newspapers all the time. They held a wide range of opinions. For example, some black women’s groups wanted to link winning the vote with wider civil rights campaigns.

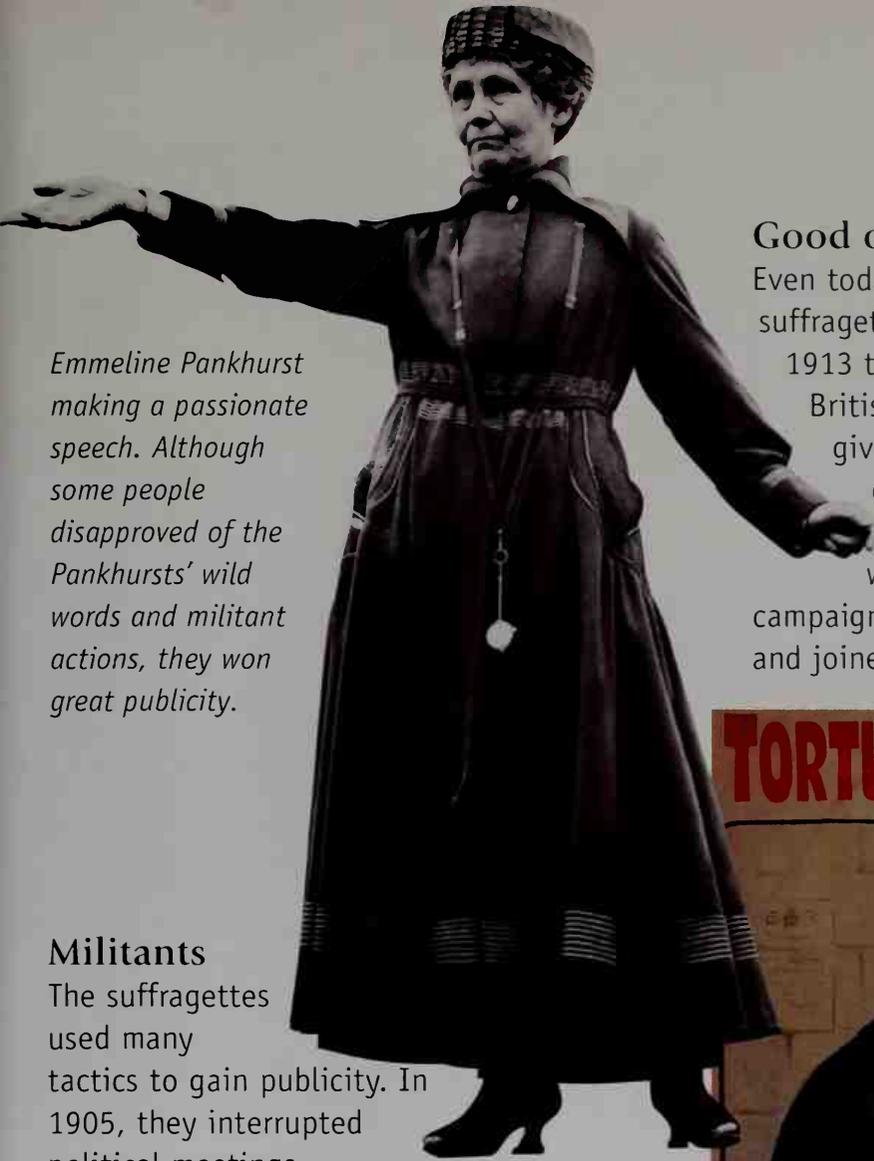
## Time to act

Until 1900, most women in Britain also hoped to win the vote by patient, peaceful persuasion. They were led by Millicent Fawcett, who wanted to show that women could win without using threats or violence—the typical weapons of men. A few British campaigners did not agree. They wanted to take direct action. In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst, with her husband and daughters, founded the WSPU (Women’s Social and Political Union). Its main aim was to make people and the government pay attention to them until they won the vote for women. The Pankhursts attracted many followers, who became known as “suffragettes.”



*A British suffragette publicity leaflet, 1911. It asked why responsible, hard-working women were not allowed to vote, while irresponsible, sometimes dangerous, men could vote.*

*Emmeline Pankhurst making a passionate speech. Although some people disapproved of the Pankhursts' wild words and militant actions, they won great publicity.*



### **Militants**

The suffragettes used many tactics to gain publicity. In 1905, they interrupted political meetings, especially when government ministers were speaking. After 1906, they deliberately tried to be arrested and sent to prison. They were careful never to use violence against people, but from 1908 on, they decided to attack property—mostly by smashing shop windows or damaging men's sports grounds.

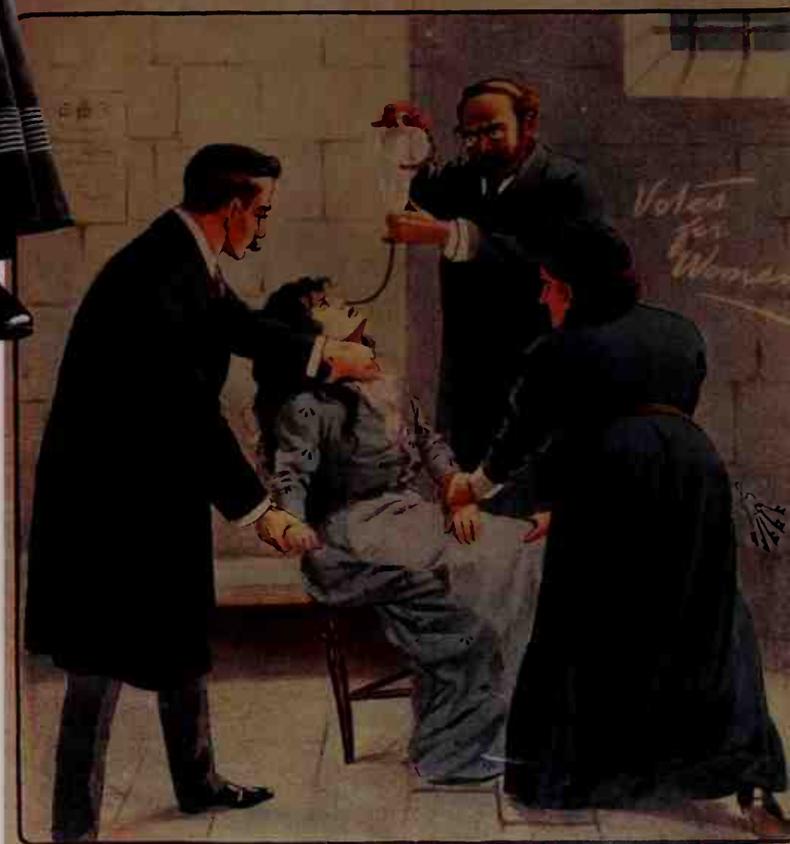
### **Violent protests**

In 1913 suffragettes carried out many violent protests—they set fire to mailboxes and railway buildings, cut telegraph wires, and poured purple dye into public drinking-water reservoirs. A suffragette hurled an ax at the Prime Minister, barely missing him. The nation was shocked when campaigner Emily Davison threw herself under the King's horse at an important race. She died from her injuries a few days later.

### **Good or bad?**

Even today, people disagree about whether suffragette tactics worked. Many people in 1913 thought they had gone too far. The British government said it would never give in to their demands, for fear that other groups, such as militant trade unionists and Irish Republicans, would start similar violent campaigns. Many women left the WSPU and joined the nonviolent NUWSS instead.

## **TORTURING WOMEN IN PRISON**



## **VOTE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT**

*Many suffragettes went on hunger strikes in prison. This poster is protesting the force-feeding of women prisoners.*

# Around the World

By 1918, women in Western Europe and America had made their demands very clear. Around the world, many other women were also campaigning for change. Sometimes their aims were similar to those of women in the West. Sometimes they were different. But everywhere, they proved that women were talented, responsible, full of vision, and worthy of being trusted with power.

## Southeast Asia

Women in Southeast Asia focused their campaigns on two main targets: equal educational rights for women, and freedom for their country to govern itself. (At this time, many nations in Southeast Asia were ruled by Europeans, as colonies.) In India, for example, Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949) worked closely with Mahatma Gandhi, campaigning for independence and organizing peaceful protests while Gandhi was in prison. In the Philippines, Melchora Aquino began her political activities when she was 83, by sheltering rebel soldiers. The islands gained independence from Spain in 1898.



*Sarojini Naidu was one of many Indian women who became involved in politics.*

*The true worth of a race must be measured by the character of its womanhood.*

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE,  
AFRICAN-AMERICAN CAMPAIGNER, 1933



*Chinese women with bound feet in the early 1900s. Teacher Ch'iu Chin (1879–1907) opposed this traditional but painful custom, and worked to improve education for Chinese girls.*

## China and Japan

In the Far East, two very different kinds of revolution were taking place in the early twentieth century. In China, rival groups of Nationalists and Communists struggled for power. Among the Nationalists, sisters Soong Ching-Ling and Soong Mei-Ling worked as secretaries and close advisers to the two main Nationalist leaders. Among the Communists, student Chen Tiejin led the revolutionary Red Guards, was captured, and executed when she was only 24. In Japan, there was a social revolution as men and women challenged traditions that had shaped their lives for hundreds of years.

## Australia and New Zealand

European women who settled in Australia and New Zealand worked very hard in their new homeland. Living in wild, harsh countryside, they had to be tough to survive. They felt they had earned the right to be

treated as men's equals. Rose

Scott (1847–1925) led demands for votes for women in Australia.

She did not marry, saying "life is too short to waste on the admiration of one man."



*In Australia Vida Goldstein campaigned for women's rights at work and in the family.*

## Africa

In many parts of Africa, women were not equal with men, but they had important traditional powers. In Nigeria, for example, women traditionally managed the trade in markets and ports. European administrators wanted to remove their powers. But Nigerian women, led by "Market Queen" Omu Okwei and teacher Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti, refused to cooperate. As a result,

women still control much of the trade in West Africa.



*Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti opposed the European rulers' attempts to limit the right of women to run the markets and ports in Nigeria.*

## SOME CAMPAIGNERS FOR CHANGE

### India

Pandita Rambai (1858–1920) campaigned for women's right to education and to train as doctors.

### Philippines

Josepha Abiertas (1894–1929) was a lawyer who campaigned for equal rights for women in the new Filipino state.

### Japan

Motoko Hani (1873–1957) described women's real lives in newspaper articles. This broke an ancient taboo and was deeply shocking.

### Australia

Vida Goldstein (1869–1949) campaigned for property rights in marriage and for divorce reform.

### New Zealand

Kate Sheppard (1848–1934) pioneered outdoor sports, and campaigned for votes for women.

Harriet Morison (1862–1925) organized trade unions for women.

## Aboriginal women

Aboriginal women, belonging to the earliest peoples who inhabited Australia and New Zealand, faced different challenges. How could they prevent their ancient beliefs and ways of life from being destroyed by the Europeans, and hold on to their traditional farms and hunting grounds? Women like New Zealand Maori campaigner Princess Te Puea set up welfare schemes for women and children, and encouraged Maori people to preserve their traditional customs and skills.

# WAR AND REVOLUTION

## First World War

Events in Serbia in 1914 drew Germany into war against Russia and France. The First World War—the worst fighting ever seen in Europe—involved Britain, Australia and many other nations. Most campaigners stopped demanding votes for women and joined in the war effort. They wanted to support their men and show how responsible women could be.

### Nursing care

Everyone—men and women—believed that nursing was women's work. In Europe, existing hospitals were reorganized, ready to admit men injured in war, and many large public buildings and private houses were turned into temporary hospitals or nursing homes. Thousands of young women volunteered to help.

*A nurse chats with soldiers who have been blinded in the war. Women nursed injured men back to health, and cheered them up as well.*



*Let us show ourselves worthy of citizenship, whether our claim to it be recognized or not.*

MILLCENT FAWCETT, 1914

*I am an enemy of war because I am a feminist. War represents the triumph of brute strength, while feminism can only triumph through moral strength and intellectual values ...*

PEACE CAMPAIGNER HÉLÈNE BRION, 1918

*Advertisers have always used pretty young women to help sell their ideas. The message on this recruiting poster was clear—“real men” should join the navy.*



### In the war zone

The First World War was unlike any other war. Enemy armies spent years living in muddy trenches and fighting over land known as the front line. Women were not allowed to go to the front line, but many worked behind the line in army hospitals as nurses and ambulance drivers. Working in difficult conditions, they cared for casualties brought in from the battlefield.



*A mother says goodbye to her soldier son. After the USA joined the war, one American woman wrote, "It is easier to die than to send a son to death."*

### Home comforts

Women also provided simple comforts for soldiers. They ran canteens for troops home on leave, and packed boxes with warm woolen socks, chocolate, a few cigarettes, and friendly messages, which were collected by the army and delivered to troops on the battlefield. Officers' wives even managed to send their husbands food packages of delicacies from famous luxury shops.

### Emotional support

Women's emotional support was also vitally important to men who were away at the war. Many soldiers carried a signed photograph of their girlfriend, sister or mother in their uniform pocket, or a loving letter from home. Cheering and encouraging troops as they marched off to war was often very difficult for women. They knew that their sons, brothers or boyfriends might well be killed.

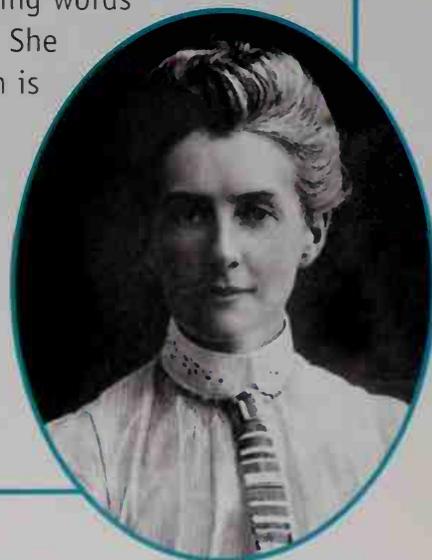
### Women against war

A few women campaigned against war. They believed that wars—almost always started by men—should be banned. They wanted quarrels to be solved by peaceful, calm discussion. Leading peace campaigners included French schoolteacher H el ene Brion and Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected (in 1917) to the US Congress.

## EDITH CAVELL

A trained nurse from England, Edith Cavell (1865–1915) went to Belgium in 1907 to be head of a nursing college. When German armies invaded Belgium during the First World War, Cavell turned the college into a Red Cross hospital. Like all Red Cross workers, she and her staff cared for injured soldiers, whatever their nationality. She was arrested by the Germans, and shot as a spy—because she let British and French troops shelter in her hospital. Her dying words became famous. She said, "Patriotism is not enough."

*Nurse Edith Cavell was honored for her bravery and for her care of all injured men.*



# Women Replace Men

Traditionally, wars were men's work. Women did not fight battles. But during the First World War, from 1914 to 1918, women proved that they could do other vital jobs just as well as men.

## Women take over

In most European countries, young men were conscripted (made by law to join the armed forces). So many were sent to fight that there were not enough men left at home to do their usual peacetime jobs. Women took over, running shops and offices, delivering mail, driving streetcars and buses, and working on farms. They took on heavy work in coal mines, shipyards, and factories. Some quickly learned the skills needed to become carpenters, toolmakers and engineers.

*In wartime, women proved that they could be trusted with skilled, responsible jobs. This woman is driving a streetcar in France in 1917.*



## New kinds of work

The war also created new kinds of jobs— assembling guns, packing ammunition, filling shells with explosives, and building aircraft. This work was urgent and vitally important. Women were often asked to work 12-hour days in government factories, and they were carefully watched and timed. Men's lives might be lost if women worked too slowly, or made mistakes.

*Carry on, carry on, for the men and boys are gone,  
But the furrow shan't lie fallow while the women carry on ...  
[fallow means plowed field; fallow means left without crops]*

JANET BEGBIE, WARTIME SONG "CARRY ON"

## Dangerous work

Much war work was unpleasant and very dangerous. The chemicals used to make explosives were poisonous—they burned the skin and irritated the lungs. Hundreds of women died as a result of working with them. Paints and varnishes used to make aircraft and trucks also gave off harmful fumes, which made women workers very sick.

*A British Ladies Fire Brigade puts out a blaze in 1916. Before the war, most men had assumed that women were scared of heights, and too weak to handle heavy ladders.*



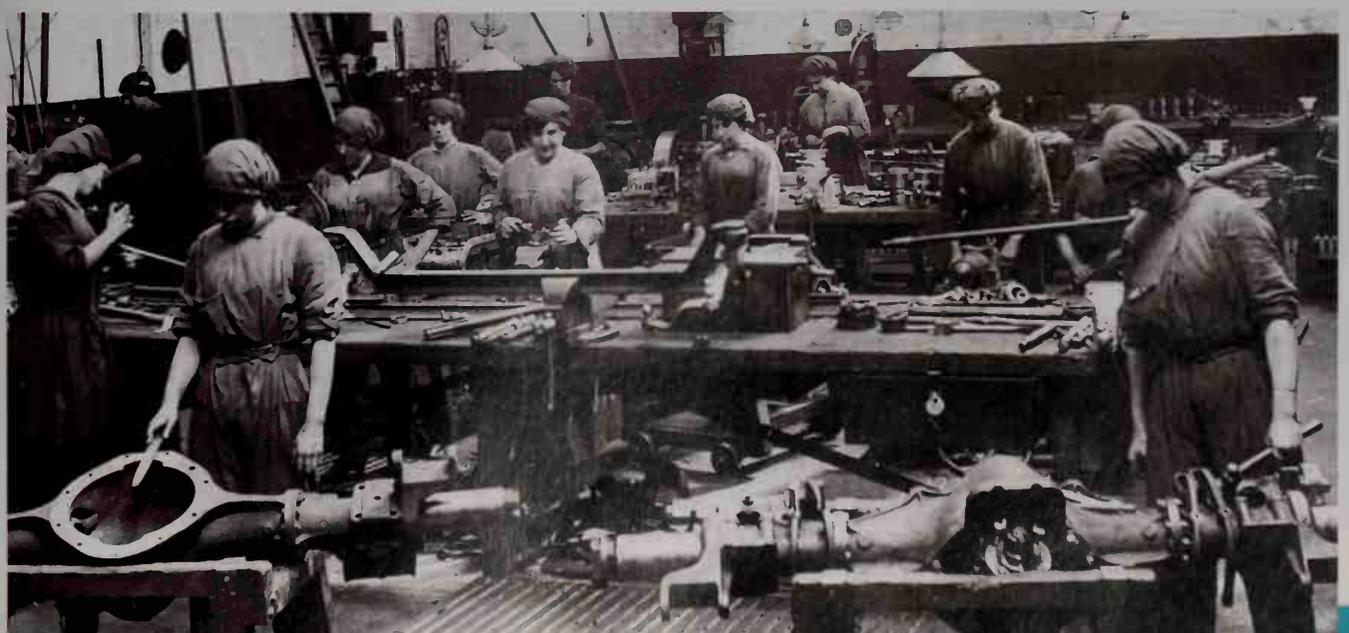


**The Girl on the Land  
Serves the Nation's Need**  
apply **Y. W. C. A.**  
Land Service Committee.

*A British poster calling for women volunteers to work on farms. Women's organizations like the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) were very good at organizing war work.*

### Proving their worth

At first, many men thought that women would be too frail to do a full day's work, or too thoughtless and silly to act responsibly. Men who had not yet gone to war protested, and even threatened to go on strike, when women workers were sent to join them. But women proved these critics wrong. They kept the country running almost normally, while the men were away at war.



## FLYING WOMEN

The First World War was the first war in which aircraft played an important part. Pilots—all men—flew over enemy land to spy on soldiers and tanks. But a few daring women were also interested in flying. So, in Britain in 1917, Helen Gwynne-Vaughan organized the Women's Army Auxiliary Air Force. Trained women went to France to maintain and repair the British Army's few, precious warplanes.

### American women's war work

Women in America also joined in the war effort, even though the USA did not fight until 1917. The largest votes-for-women organization sponsored a soldiers' hospital in France. Leading campaigners knitted army socks in public. Well-known women, like silent-film star Mary Pickford, asked people to buy Liberty Bonds to help pay for the war. One million ordinary American women worked in war factories.

*Before the war, women received no technical training at school. But in wartime they quickly learned new skills.*

# The Russian Revolution

In 1905, Russian workers, soldiers and peasants started a revolution against the Czar [emperor], but it failed. It was followed by protests and strikes. In 1917, there were two more revolutions. The first, led by moderate liberals, removed the Czar from power. The second was led by Bolsheviks (communists who were ready to use violence to win power). Women played an important part in these revolutions and suffered as much as the men.

*We, the women of Russia, who are living at this great time of Russia's renewal ... appeal to male honor and conscience, and demand ... civil and political rights equal to men's.*

RUSSIAN WOMEN'S UNION  
DEMAND, c. 1905



*Women protesters, armed with guns, marching through the streets of St. Petersburg, Russia, during one of the revolutions in 1917.*

## Rights and reforms

When women protesters demonstrated in front of the Czar's palace in 1905, they were fired on with machine guns by the palace guards. For most of these women, demands for political reform were linked to demands for women's rights. Revolutionaries such as Alexandra Kollontai spoke to women working in factories. They said they were going to talk about women's health and baby care, but in fact they spoke about workers' freedom and women's rights. The factory workers eagerly supported them.

## Communists seize power

In 1917 in bitter winter weather, Russian women lining up for bread to feed their families staged more antigovernment protests. They were joined by communist factory workers and by soldiers and sailors, angry with the way the government was handling the war. Together, they attacked government offices and the Czar's old palace. Impressed by the protesters' strength, communist leaders decided that the time had come to act, and seized power.

*Before the revolutions, women from wealthy Russian families lived very comfortable lives. This painting, by Russian artist Ilya Efimovich Repin, shows his wife, children and a woman servant in a large, well-furnished room.*



## ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952) became convinced that the Russian political system under the Czar was wrong. She wrote protest stories, joined a workers' movement, left her husband and young son, and went to Switzerland to study economics. She became a Bolshevik, and campaigned for women's rights.

After the Czar was overthrown in 1917, Kollontai returned to Russia, and was made minister for welfare. She was the only woman minister in the revolutionary government and the first female government minister in the world. The

Bolsheviks admired her spirit and some of her ideas, but not her independent mind. In 1923, they sent her away from Russia as an ambassador and she spent the rest of her life abroad.

### Changes!

The revolutions in Russia changed women's lives dramatically. After the first revolution in 1917, Russian women were given equal rights with men, including the right to vote. After the second revolution, Bolshevik leaders created a special *Zhenodtel* (women's office) within the government. As minister of welfare, Alexandra Kollontai introduced new laws giving women equal rights within marriage, and the chance of a fair divorce.

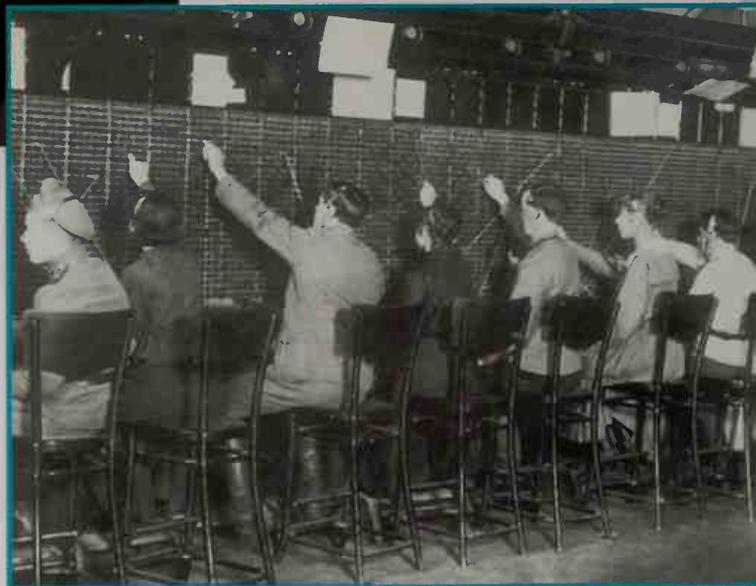
*After the communist revolution in 1917, women were appointed to many official jobs in the new government. Here, a female election supervisor helps a woman cast her vote.*



*Women and men working side by side in a telephone exchange during the revolution of 1917.*

### Revolutionary ideas

There was a price to pay for these benefits. After 1917, all women (including mothers) were expected by law to work just as hard as men, all their lives, in state-run factories and farms. Many women felt this was a fair deal. But they did not agree with Kollontai's idea to end marriage and families altogether and to have the state raise children and care for old people instead.



# WOMEN AND POLITICS

## The Vote—at Last

After the First World War, women in Britain and America finally won the right to vote equally with men. In the USA, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution (1920) declared that no citizen should be banned from voting “on account of sex.” In Britain, a law passed in 1918 allowed women over the age of 30 to vote. Ten years later, all women over 21 were allowed to vote.



*American suffragists in 1917 picketing the White House, home of the President, to demand the right to vote.*

### How the vote was won

In the USA, votes-for-women protesters had stood outside the White House for six months in 1917. In the end, President Wilson himself agreed to ask senators and congressmen to accept their demands. The British government was impressed with women’s war work, but nervous about headstrong young women, and agreed to give only older women the vote at first.

*Women ... have proved themselves able to undertake work that before the war was regarded as solely the province of men ... Where is the man now who would deny to women the civil rights which she has earned by her hard work?*

BRITISH MALE GOVERNMENT MINISTER, 1916

### Why now?

There was no single reason why men (who controlled politics and law-making) decided to give women the vote. Women’s long, patient years of campaigning in local and national associations played an important part. So did the violent demonstrations of the suffragettes—though they discouraged many men, too. But the most important reason of all was the way in which women in Britain and the USA had behaved during the First World War.

*Carrie Chapman Catt (1859–1947) organized the American campaign to win the vote.*



## Minds of their own

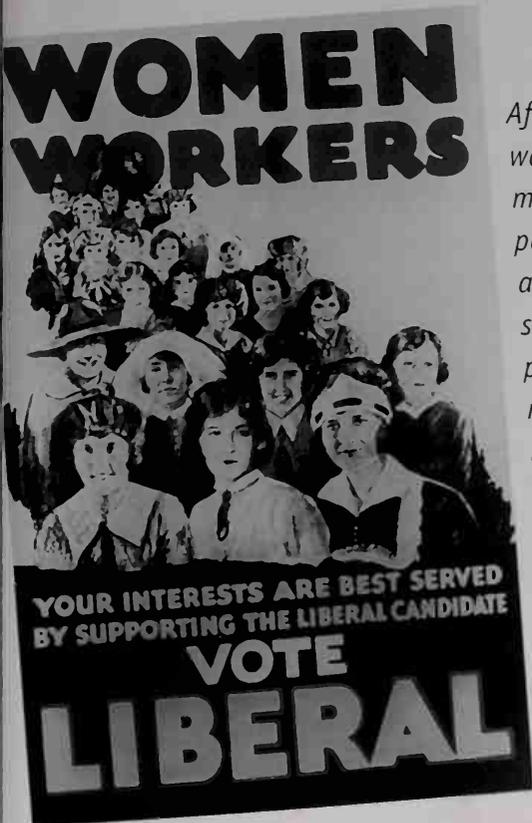
Men could no longer claim that women were too fragile or too stupid to be trusted with the vote. No one could believe that “a woman’s place is in the home,” when women had been seen digging coal, driving trucks and making bombs. Although many men had disliked working alongside women at the beginning of the war, some had learned to respect their female colleagues as equals.

## Hopes for the future

To women everywhere, voting meant that they were publicly recognized as equal citizens, and could play a full part in politics. Women also hoped that voting would open the door to new opportunities—in work, education, and public service. They hoped it would encourage governments and employers to treat them as men’s equals in other ways too.



Women campaigned for the vote in many European countries. This Dutch cartoon shows women confronting their prime minister in 1918.



*After women won the vote, male-led political parties asked for their support. This poster shows new, young British women voters in 1931.*

## WOMEN’S VOTING RIGHTS WORLDWIDE

Britain and America were not the first nations to give women rights to vote:

- 1893 New Zealand (the first ever)
- 1902 Australia
- 1906 Finland
- 1915 Denmark
- 1917 Russia
- 1918 Britain (for women aged over 30)
- 1919 Netherlands
- 1920 USA, Czechoslovakia
- 1921 Sweden
- 1928 Britain (for women aged over 21)
- 1931 Spain
- 1932 Brazil, Uruguay, Thailand, the Maldives
- 1933 Turkey
- 1934 Cuba
- 1941 Panama
- 1944 France

# Women Helping Women

Even after women won the vote, they continued to join local and national groups to help other, less fortunate, women, or to achieve their shared aims.

## Welfare work

During the 1890s, wealthy American and British women had helped found settlement houses in poor, run-down city areas. Settlements were designed as community centers, offering help and advice on welfare issues, and classes on subjects from basic hygiene to office skills—and sometimes music and art. They often had cafeterias where cheap, nourishing food was served.

## Mother-and-baby clinics

Women doctors, nurses and unpaid helpers also worked together in many mother-and-baby clinics. There, they gave free advice on child health and nutrition to women who could not afford to see a doctor. Controversially, some clinics also offered contraceptive advice to married women.

## Self-improvement

Many other clubs and societies provided help, education and fellowship for women and girls. In Britain, the Mothers' Union combined prayer and Bible reading with discussions on children's education and family welfare. Other groups, like the Women's Institute, had no religious connections, but encouraged women to broaden their outlook by hearing talks on travel, fashion, current affairs and the arts.

*I am my mother's daughter, and the drums of Africa still beat in my heart. They will not let me rest while there is a single Negro boy or girl without a chance to prove their worth.*

MARY McLIOD BETHUNE, 1941



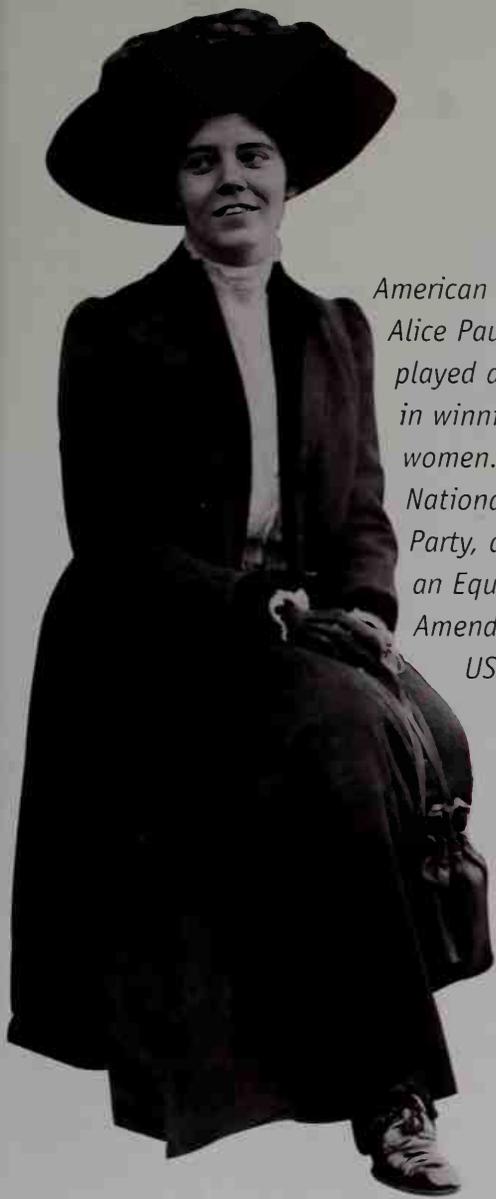
*Margaret Sanger campaigned for women's health and set up special clinics for mothers.*

## Guides and Scouts

Clubs for teenage girls, especially the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, became popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Their ideal young woman was fit, active well-informed, confident and capable, dressed in a short skirt and with windblown hair—quite a change from the sheltered, ideal girl of 1900, dressed in a long, heavy dress, with her hair elaborately pinned into place.



*British Girl Guides preparing a meal while camping on the beach at Le Touquet in France in the 1920s.*



*American campaigner Alice Paul (1885–1977) played a leading part in winning votes for women. She led the National Women’s Party, and suggested an Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution in 1916.*

## MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

Bethune’s parents had both been slaves. Bethune (1875–1955) worked on cotton plantations until she won a college scholarship. She worked as a schoolteacher, got married, and decided to set up her own school for poor African-American girls. The school flourished and, in 1923, merged with a nearby school for African-American boys, to become Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune also helped set up small businesses and a housing improvement scheme. In 1936, she became the first African-American woman to hold a major government office.

### Equal rights

Winning the vote was an achievement for women, but it was not the end of their struggle. In America, women’s organizations, especially the National Women’s Party, began a campaign for the US Constitution to be amended to give women equality in all areas of life. Today their aim has still not been achieved.

### Black women’s rights

For many members of the US National Women’s Party, equal rights did not always mean black people’s rights. Women from ethnic minorities often campaigned for their own rights alone. Forceful, determined women, like Mary McLeod Bethune, worked hard to improve education and jobs for young African-Americans, especially girls.



*Mary McLeod Bethune (on the left of the picture) at a meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President. Both women helped disadvantaged people and became close friends.*

# Women with Power

Women campaigning for the right to vote also demanded the right to be elected to national governments—to Congress and the Senate in the USA, and to the House of Commons in Britain. They wanted to make government policy as well as vote on it.

*Men and women are like right and left hands; it doesn't make sense not to use both.*

PROBABLY SAID BY  
CONGRESSWOMAN JEANNETTE RANKIN

## First steps

Until 1900, hardly any women had political power. The only exceptions were rulers, like Queen Victoria of Britain, who died in 1901. Women married to powerful men, such as presidents and state governors, sometimes managed to influence their husbands' opinions, and even to make them change their minds. But they had no right to do this, and were often hated for it.

## First mayoress

Very rarely, a woman whose husband had died was allowed to continue his local government work, and in this way women proved that they could handle power. For example, in 1907, pioneer doctor Elizabeth Garrett Anderson took over as mayor of a small English town when her husband died. She was so successful that the town council invited her to be a candidate in new elections in 1908. She won, and became mayor in her own right.

## Winning national elections

The first woman elected to national political office in America was Jeannette Rankin, who became a Republican congresswoman in 1917. She was a supporter of votes for women, and was well known for her hard-working campaigns. She traveled vast distances on horseback to meet the voters. She was a trained social worker and tried to introduce laws to protect women and children. She lost her seat after opposing America's entry into the First World War.



*Helene Weber was a member of the Prussian (North German) government until 1933, when the Nazis forced her to resign. In 1946 she returned to politics and won great respect.*



*Lady Astor was the first British woman to take her seat in Parliament. Here she speaks to women students in 1925. They played an important part in politics after women won the vote.*

### Members of Parliament

The first British woman MP to play an active part in Parliament was an American, Nancy Astor. She was married to a wealthy Englishman, and was elected in 1919, as MP for the port of Plymouth. She served as an MP for over 20 years. She supported laws designed to help women and children, and campaigned fiercely against alcohol abuse because of the harm it did to many families.

### Still a minority

Rankin, Markiewicz (see box) and Astor were all outstanding women. Voters were happy to elect them, but, in Britain and the USA, they were cautious about voting many women into power. Local political parties seldom chose women as candidates. At the 1931 general election in Britain, there were only 67 women candidates competing for about 400 seats as MPs. Of these, just 15 were elected.

## THE REBEL COUNTESS

The first British woman MP was Countess Constance Markiewicz (1868–1927). She married a Polish nobleman, and was a passionate and active supporter of independence for Ireland. She was condemned to death for carrying a gun and commanding a troop of soldiers, but this sentence was changed to life imprisonment. In the 1918 general election—the first when British women could vote—Markiewicz was elected to Parliament as an MP for Dublin, even though she was still in prison. She was reelected several times but refused to attend the British Parliament as a protest against Britain’s rule in Ireland.



*Countess Markiewicz campaigning for votes in Dublin in 1922. She is surrounded by children, probably members of the “Na Fianna,” the Irish independence youth movement she founded.*

# POSTWAR WORLD

Few people, men or women, lived through the First World War without suffering. When the war ended, they felt scarred and saddened yet also very relieved. Peace in 1918 brought a new sense of hope, and dreams of new possibilities. How did these affect women's everyday lives?

## Freedom from rules

For women who had lost their husbands peace often brought money worries and loneliness (see page 27). Young single women also mourned their dead brothers and friends, but, as survivors, they wanted to make the best of any new opportunities. They broke the old rules of respectable behavior. They wore daring new fashions, and went out alone or with men, without a chaperone (older woman) to watch them.

*No time to marry, no time to settle down,  
I'm a young woman, and I ain't done  
running around...*

FROM "YOUNG WOMAN  
BLUES," SUNG BY BESSIE SMITH, 1927

## Leaving home

Sometimes, if they could afford it, young single women even left their family home to live alone, or with other female friends. This was a big change—before the war, almost all unmarried women lived with their families or in their employers' homes.

## Flappers

These liberated young women were known as flappers or "bright young things." To them, the old rules for good behavior seemed ridiculous. The rules were meant to protect young ladies from the harsh realities of life. But women who had spent the war doing difficult, dangerous work, or nursing soldiers in army camps, no longer needed protection. Winning the vote made women even more scornful. What right did men—or society—have to limit what they could do?

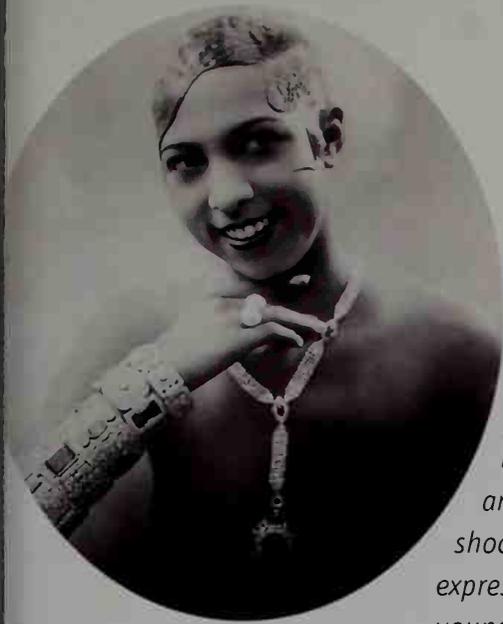
*A crowd of "bright young things" riding in a stylish new car. A woman driver was rare in the 1920s.*



## WOMEN AND SPORTS

In the 1920s many women seized the chance to play tennis, hockey and golf, to run, dive and swim, drive sports cars and fly dangerous planes. Before the war, men had said that women lacked strength and the urge to compete. They also said it was not decent for women to show their arms and legs or look sweaty in public.

By the 1920s, sportswomen no longer cared what men thought of them. They wore short, loose dresses or pants (this was very shocking), so they could move easily. Pioneer sportswomen, such as Suzanne Lenglen (from France) and long-distance pilot Amelia Earhart (from the USA), became world famous and were admired by men and women.



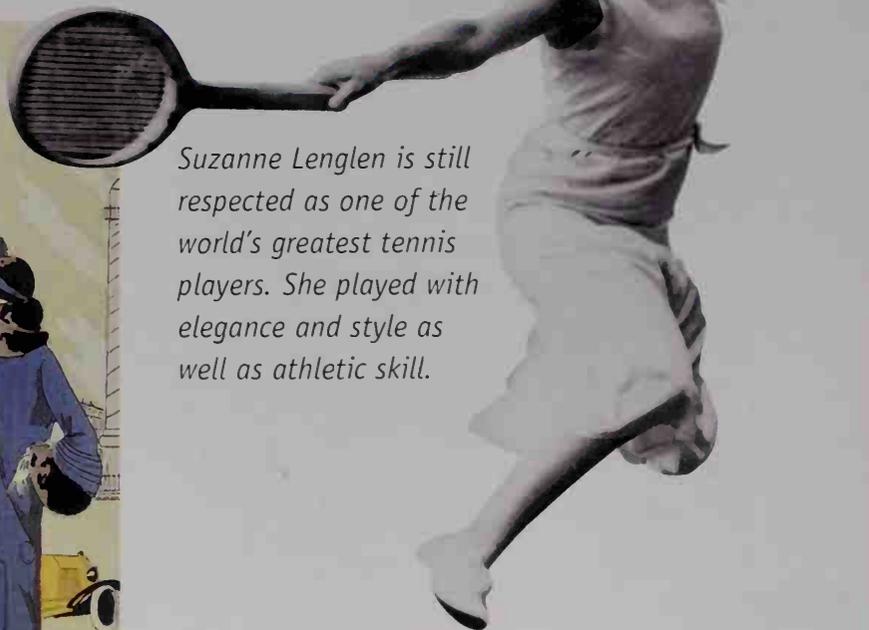
*Entertainer Josephine Baker was bold, defiant and sometimes shocking, but she expressed what many young people felt.*

### Having fun

As wage earners, young women could spend their own money on clothes, music and entertainment. New music (especially wild, rebellious jazz or soulful blues), dance crazes (such as the energetic Charleston), nightclubs, fashions and new, fast cars were all very exciting.



*Suzanne Lenglen is still respected as one of the world's greatest tennis players. She played with elegance and style as well as athletic skill.*



*An illustration from a fashion magazine, showing popular styles of the 1920s. Women's bodies were no longer trapped inside tight corsets, but were comfortable and free to move.*



# New Jobs for Women?

As the First World War ended in 1918, 3,000 British women working in wartime jobs were asked what they wanted to do with their lives. Almost all of them said they would prefer to continue in their new jobs, rather than return to old-fashioned women's work. This was not the answer the British government wanted to hear. It urged women to give up their wartime jobs, so that there would be work for returning soldiers.

## Back to the old ways

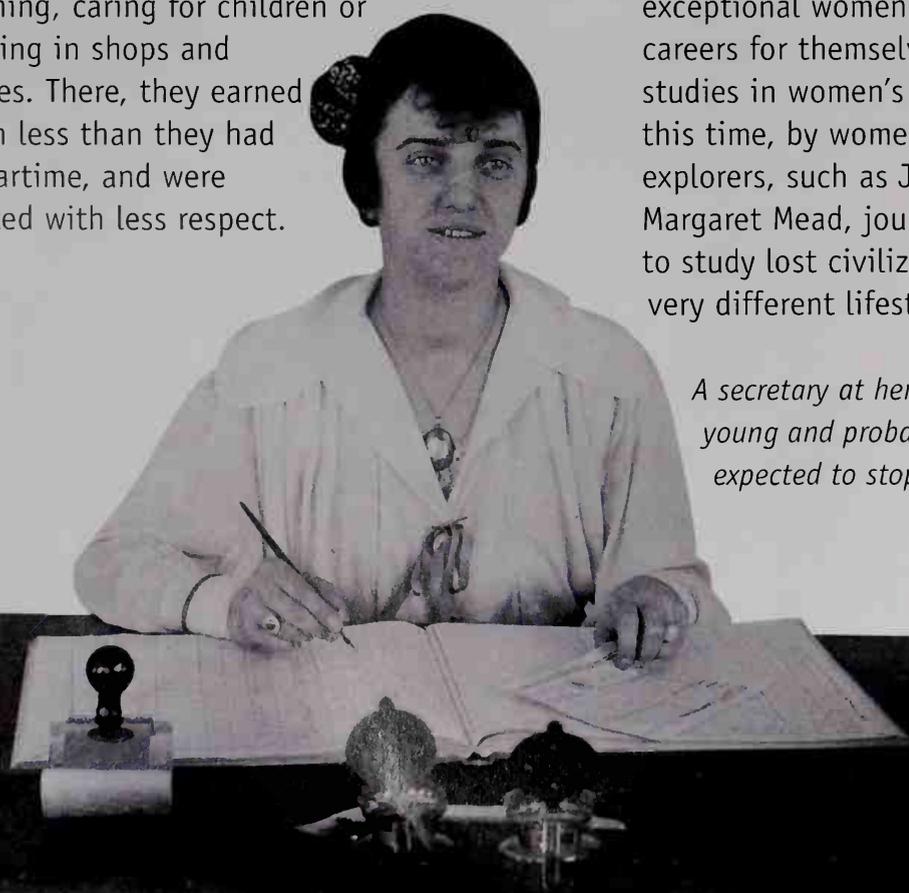
By the end of 1919, there were hardly any women still doing war work. Women with husbands, or who came from wealthy families, gave up full-time work altogether. Single women returned, very reluctantly, to prewar female jobs—cooking, cleaning, caring for children or working in shops and offices. There, they earned much less than they had in wartime, and were treated with less respect.



*A woman schoolteacher and her pupils in Germany in 1921. Women teachers were respected, but not usually highly paid.*

## New careers

Women teachers, nurses and doctors were now fully accepted by almost everyone. Increasing numbers of women found work in other professions—as librarians, college lecturers, and academic researchers. A few exceptional women did manage to make new careers for themselves. Some of the earliest studies in women's history were written at this time, by women historians. Women explorers, such as Jacquetta Hawkes and Margaret Mead, journeyed to remote places to study lost civilizations and peoples with very different lifestyles from their own.



*A secretary at her desk in 1921. She is young and probably single. Women were expected to stop work when they married.*



*Women artists pioneered dramatic new styles. This bright, challenging oil painting was created by Russian woman artist Liubov Popova. It was called Spatial Force Construction 1921.*

### **Artistic talent**

Women writers worked as journalists, novelists and in the new—vastly popular—film industry. Women with artistic talents, such as Sonia Delaunay and Eileen Gray, set up studios where they made and sold paintings, pottery, fabric and furniture in startling new designs. Women designers like Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli (whose clothes were witty and dramatic, and who invented the color shocking pink) also won many admirers. Other women set up small shops selling feminine goods such as hats, clothes, shoes or babywear.

## **WOMEN WITHOUT MEN**

More than 10 million men were killed in Europe during the First World War, and more than 20 million were seriously injured. This meant a whole group of men aged between 15 and 40 years old had died. They left millions of grieving widows and girlfriends.

Some widows did not want to remarry. They preferred to cherish their husband's memory and look after their children. They had little chance of finding another partner anyway. Most single women in the 1920s knew that they would have to spend their lives without men, which also meant without children. At that time, it was unthinkable for a respectable woman to have a child outside of marriage.



*Life was not easy for women whose husbands had been killed in the war. They often had little money and great responsibilities.*

# RETURN TO OLD VALUES

## Women and Trade Unions

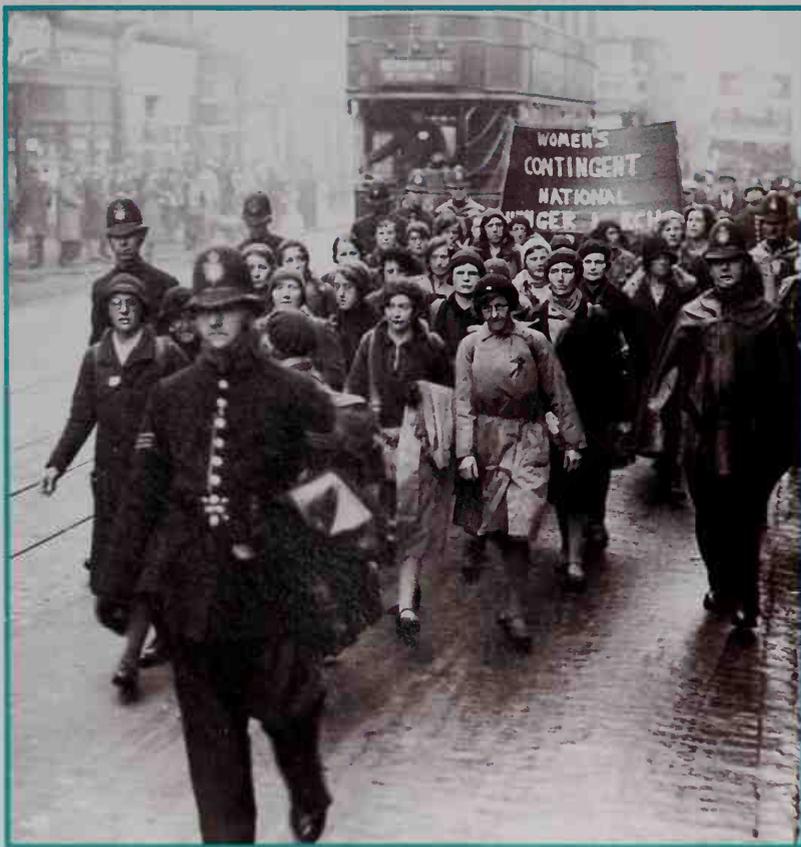
Ever since the early nineteenth century, women had joined trade unions. But in the 1920s and 1930s trade unions were still dominated by men. Many working men were suspicious of women who wanted full-time, lifelong careers.

### Jobs for men

Most men in the 1920s and 1930s did not think that equal pay and jobs for women were nearly as important as finding jobs for men—especially soldiers. Governments and trade unions saw women's demands for equality as a threat. If women were given jobs, then more men would be out of work.

*A trade unionist—of course I am. First, last, and all the time. How else to strike at the roots of the evils undermining the moral and physical health of women?*

MAUD YOUNGER,  
A WOMAN TRADE UNIONIST



### The family wage

Most men also believed in the idea of a family wage. They thought that the right way to organize an economy was to pay one person in each family—almost always the man—enough to feed, clothe and house all the people who depended on him. If a woman worked, then her money was for extras. She should either spend it on things to help the family (a new stove, maybe) or save it for a rainy day.

*Women taking part in a Hunger March in Britain in 1932. Trade unionists from all over Britain marched to London, demanding the chance to work or welfare to feed their families.*



*These women in Vienna, Austria, joined together in the 1920s to form a cooperative (a company they ran themselves) for maids and servants.*

### Few women belong

These attitudes meant that few women in the 1920s and 1930s belonged to trade unions. Even fewer were trade union officials, with the chance to shape union policy and change men's minds. (There were one or two exceptions to this rule—for example, in the garment industry in the USA.) But women within the trade union movement, like “Red Ellen” Wilkinson, did what they could to improve wages and conditions for women workers.

### Wider issues

Trade unions also linked women's demands at work to wider issues of equality. They were active in women's education. For example, American union leader Ella Barker organized the Workers Educational Program, which ran summer schools for women factory workers at top women's colleges.

*Members of the Garment Workers' Union picketing a store in San Francisco. They were campaigning for better conditions and higher wages.*

## “RED ELLEN” WILKINSON

Wilkinson (1891–1947) was nicknamed “Red Ellen” for the color of her hair—and because red is the color of revolution. She was the daughter of a British cotton-factory worker, who won a scholarship to university, campaigned for votes for women, and became a public speaker for the Independent Labour Party. In 1915, she became an organizer for the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees. She worked hard to help low-paid workers, especially women.

Wilkinson briefly joined the Communist Party, then became a Member of Parliament—the first woman Labour Party MP. All her life she campaigned for justice and social change. She was minister of pensions and minister of education, but she continued to support the trade unions and the unemployed.



# Good Wives and Mothers

By the 1930s, many “bright young things” were approaching middle age. As they matured and slowed down a little, new ideas about women became fashionable. People began to suggest, once again, that a woman’s place was in the home.

## Unfair!

There were many reasons behind these new ideas. Some were economic. After 1930, many industries faced serious problems, and millions of men were unemployed (see page 32). It seemed very unfair to them that some women were still working.

*The woman who can move about a house,  
Whether it be a mansion or a camp,  
And deftly lay a fire, and spread a cloth,  
And light a lamp  
And by the magic of a quick touch give  
A look of home to wherever she may be  
Such a woman will always seem  
Great and beautiful to me.*

GRACE NOLL CROWELL



## Right-wing ideas

New ideas about women were also connected to new political theories, particularly right-wing ones. (Left-wingers—communists and socialists—tended to see women as almost equal to men.) The most extreme right-wing theories, known as fascism, were popular in Germany, Italy and Austria. There men were encouraged to be warriors. One German leader summed up women’s role as “Church, Children, Cooking.” These ideas were never popular in the United States, but they had some influence there.

*A popular British magazine from 1933. For women who did not go out to work, homemaking and child care were topics of great interest, in which they could show skill and creativity.*

## Mothers of the race

In European countries with overseas empires, some politicians argued that it was women's duty to stay at home as "wives and mothers of the race." Although this sounds shocking today, they believed that Europeans had a God-given right to rule other parts of the world. To do this, a steady supply of young men was needed. By raising boys to serve the empire (and girls who would marry them) mothers were performing an important task.



*A middle-class American family in about 1940. The husband and children are seated and eating. The wife is serving their food.*

## Glamour and charm

The idea of woman as homemaker also appealed to many women. By the 1930s, there was a new generation of young women, born shortly before the First World War. Unlike their mothers or older sisters, they had not worked in challenging wartime jobs or campaigned for the vote. They wanted to be glamorous and charming, not tough and strong. And they now had the chance to marry and raise children of their own.

*Swedish movie star Greta Garbo was a leading example of 1930s glamour and charm. She was cold and mysterious, but many men thought that her womanly beauty was attractive.*

## Upper class

Staying at home was also a matter of class. If a woman stayed at home, it was a sign of wealth and refinement. It showed that her husband earned enough, or owned enough, to support his whole family. Some men insisted that their wives stay at home, even though they were really fairly poor. Sometimes their wives were pleased to have the chance to show off their status. Others found it a burden.



# THE GREAT DEPRESSION

## The Crash—and After

The 1920s were a time of hope and new ideas. New businesses were set up, and seemed to be booming. But in 1929, the US stock market suddenly crashed. Share prices fell, making many people's savings worthless overnight. Families and companies were ruined, and the American economic crisis (often known as the "Great Depression") spread to many countries around the world. What impact did this have on women?

### Out of work

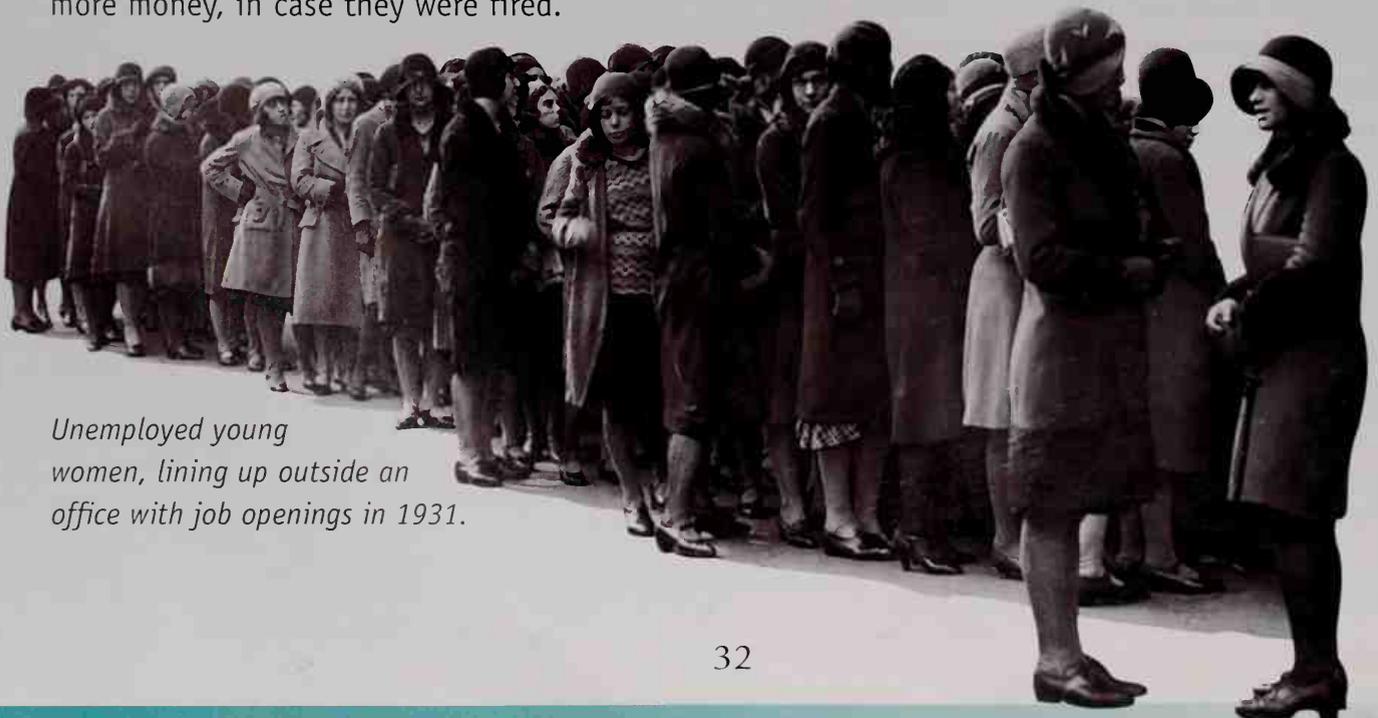
The most damaging effect of the stock market crash was that millions of people lost their jobs. Businesses in many countries collapsed. People lucky enough to keep their jobs found that their wages fell. Employers could not afford to pay them well—but they also knew that workers were afraid to ask for more money, in case they were fired.

*While you're living in your mansion,  
you don't know what hard times mean;  
Poor working man's wife is starving; your  
wife is living like a queen.*

FROM "POOR MAN'S BLUES,"  
SUNG BY BESSIE SMITH, 1930

### Welfare lines

In the cities, men and women lined up for hours at employment offices, hoping to be offered work of any kind. They also lined up for cheap meals, cooked and served by charities. They begged in the streets, or tramped from business to business, desperate to find a job. Many families became homeless and lived on the streets, or took shelter in railroad stations or other public buildings. The fortunate ones found beds in welfare centers.



*Unemployed young women, lining up outside an office with job openings in 1931.*

## WOMAN WITH VISION

Dorothea Lange (1895–1965) was a photographer who showed the rest of the world how US farmwomen and their families were suffering during the Great Depression. Her photos showed the women's determination and strength, as well as their suffering. Lange's photos were part of a project sponsored by the government to record the lives of farming families. They helped win support for Roosevelt's New Deal welfare program to help the poor (see page 34).



*Dorothea Lange took this photo in 1938. It shows a poor American mother fanning away flies from her baby's face with a cap.*

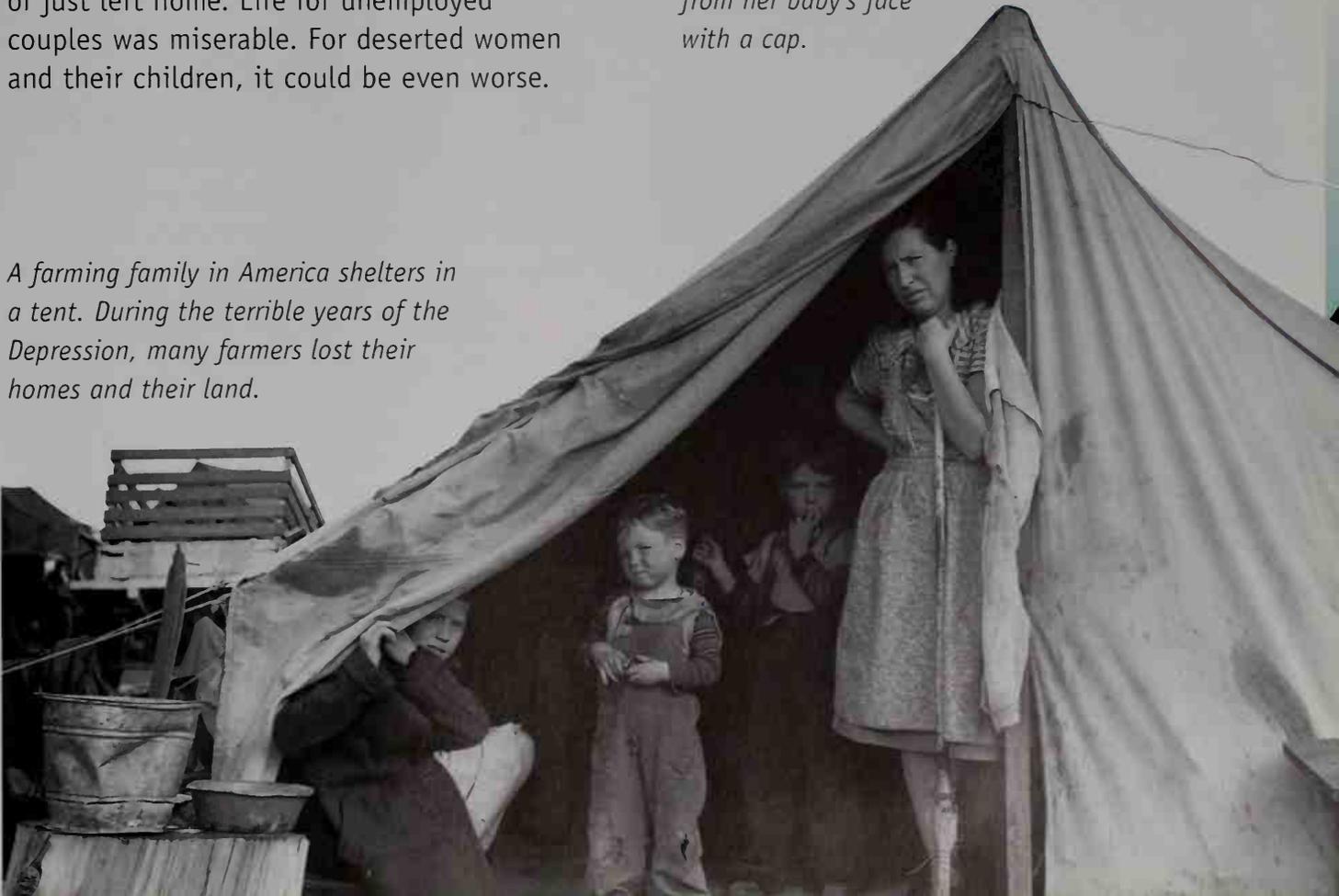
### Women come last

Many people had no money to pay for food, so farmers around the world lost their incomes too. Farmers could not afford animal feed, or seeds and fertilizers to grow crops. On farms and in cities, women traditionally put their families first. In the Depression, this meant going without food, shoes or warm clothing, so that their children would be warm and fed. Husbands, trade unions, governments and employers all put pressure on working women to give up their jobs, so that men could work instead.

### Tensions

Money worries often led to tensions between husbands and wives. Men felt worthless if they could not provide food and a home for their families. Faced with ruin, men committed suicide, became violent toward their wives and children, asked for a divorce, or just left home. Life for unemployed couples was miserable. For deserted women and their children, it could be even worse.

*A farming family in America shelters in a tent. During the terrible years of the Depression, many farmers lost their homes and their land.*

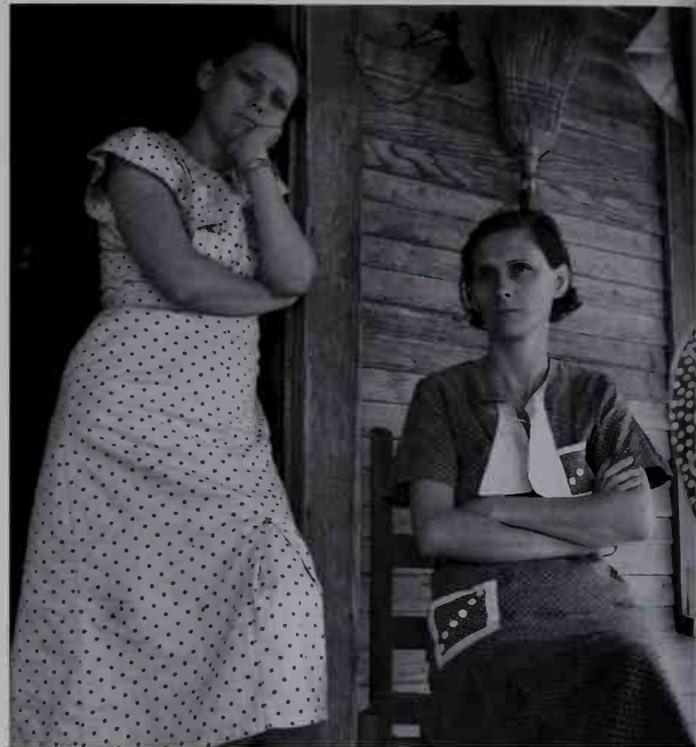


# Slow Recovery

During the 1930s Depression, women did their best to cope with unemployment and poverty. If their families still had money, they gave food or volunteered to help with welfare programs. Even women who had almost nothing assisted one another in the best way they could. But governments in many countries realized that charity and voluntary work were not enough. Poor people needed help from the state to survive, and governments had to help rebuild the economy.



*Frances Perkins (1882–1965) was the first woman Cabinet member in the US. She introduced new laws covering Social Security benefits, wages and working hours.*



*Women in Memphis, Tennessee. During the 1930s, many American women were forced to stay home to make sure that their families were adequately fed and clothed.*

## The New Deal

In the USA, where the Depression had begun, President Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor, launched a welfare program known as the New Deal. It helped the poorest groups in society: poor women and black people. He also appointed Frances Perkins secretary of labor.

## Not for women

Britain and some other countries in Europe also passed welfare laws, but few were as wide-ranging as the New Deal. Many of their benefits did not apply to women. For example, in Britain most married women and many workers in women's jobs, such as domestic servants or cleaners, could not claim unemployment pay. Women who lost their jobs and refused to do domestic work were paid no welfare benefits.

## A long way from victory

Many women during the 1930s felt they were further away than ever from achieving equal rights with men. They had the vote, and laws governing marriage, divorce and children were less unfair. But women's wages were still much lower than men's, and hardly any women were promoted to high-level jobs.

## Women, unite!

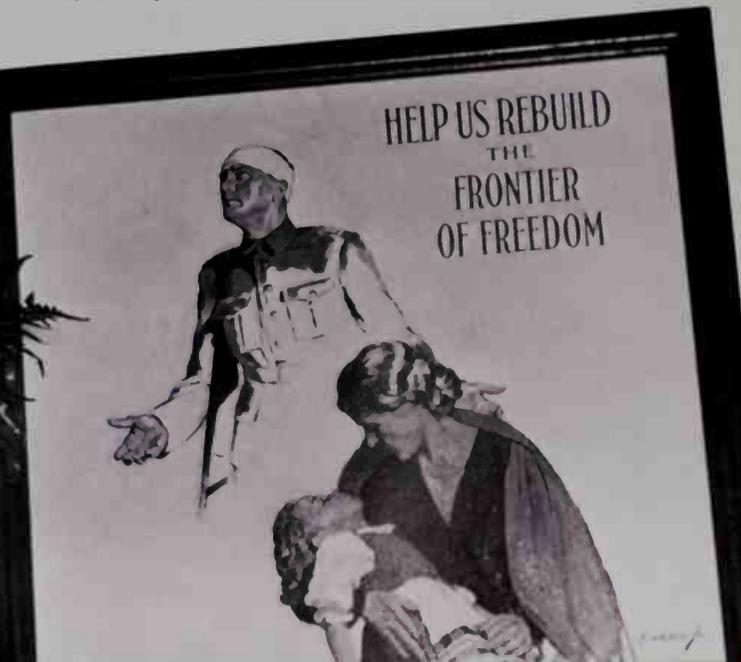
Women also felt discouraged for another reason. Ever since the vote was won, there had been no single issue on which they could all unite and agree. Now, in the 1930s, there were many women's organizations, all with their own views and plans. They disagreed about religion and politics. Campaigners feared that unless these groups could join together women would never win equal rights.

## ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt (1884–1962) was born into a wealthy, powerful family, and devoted her life to helping women, children, African Americans and the poor. At 17, she took on unpaid work with children. At 21, she married a distant cousin, called Franklin Roosevelt, who had political ambitions. When Franklin became ill, and had to use a wheelchair, she helped him continue his political career (he was elected president in 1932). She acted as his assistant and advisor. She also continued with her own social work career, writing and speaking on welfare issues. In 1933, she toured the USA to tell people about her husband's New Deal policy.



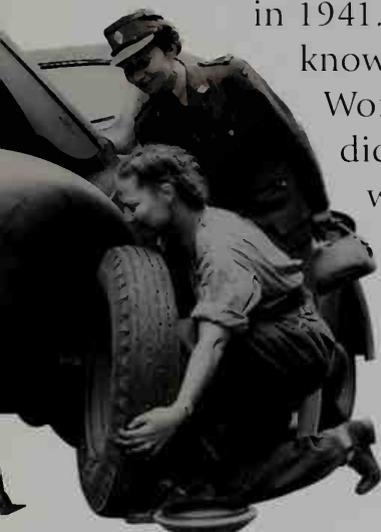
*Eleanor Roosevelt (left), at a rally in 1940 to raise money to help those at war in Europe. Roosevelt also campaigned to improve conditions for poor people, especially women and children.*



# THE SECOND WORLD WAR

## Women at War

In 1939, Britain and many other European nations were once again at war with Germany. Germany's main allies were Italy and Japan. America joined the war on the British side in 1941. This conflict became known as the Second World War. Women did not fight, but worked closely alongside men to help them plan and prepare for battle.



*Women in the Canadian Army change the wheel of an army car in 1943.*

### Women join forces

For the first time, governments in Europe and the USA organized large numbers of women into special branches of the armed forces. In Britain in 1939, for example, there were 3,400 women in the Women's Royal Naval Service, 8,000 in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, and 24,000 in the women's branch of the British Army. Many more young women joined later in the war.

*Never Underestimate  
the Power of a Woman*

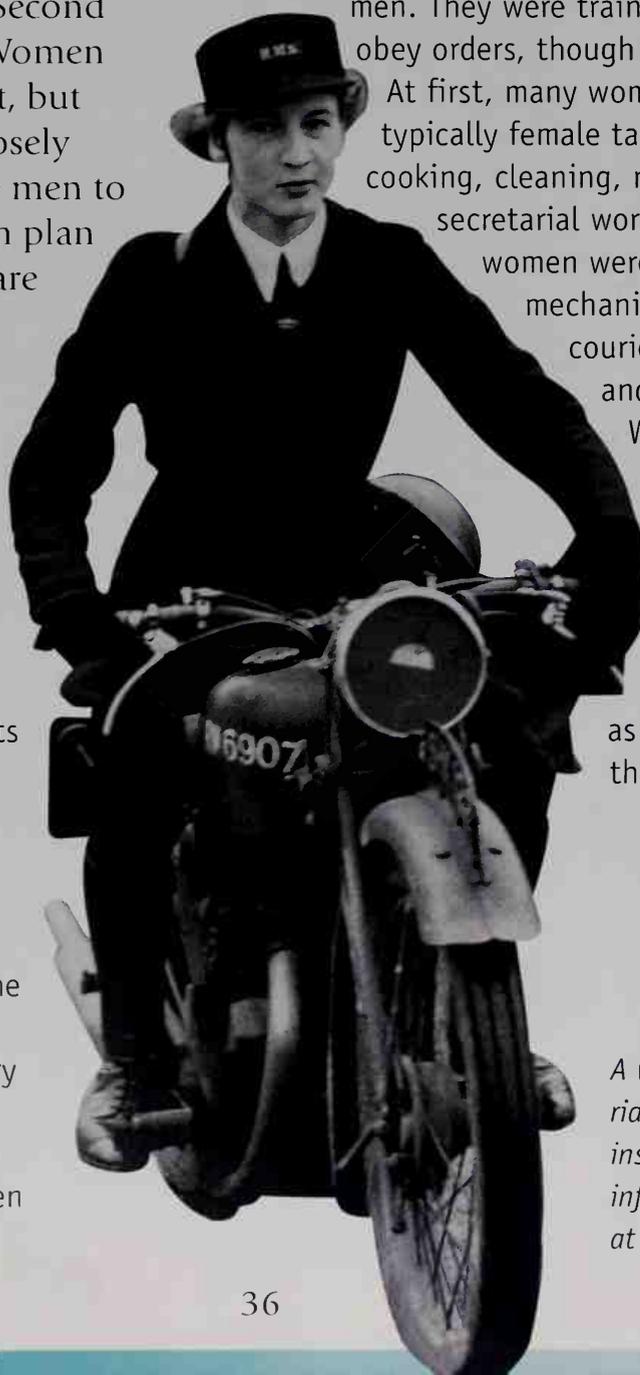
*COVER SLOGAN, LADIES  
HOME JOURNAL, 1941*

### Life in uniform

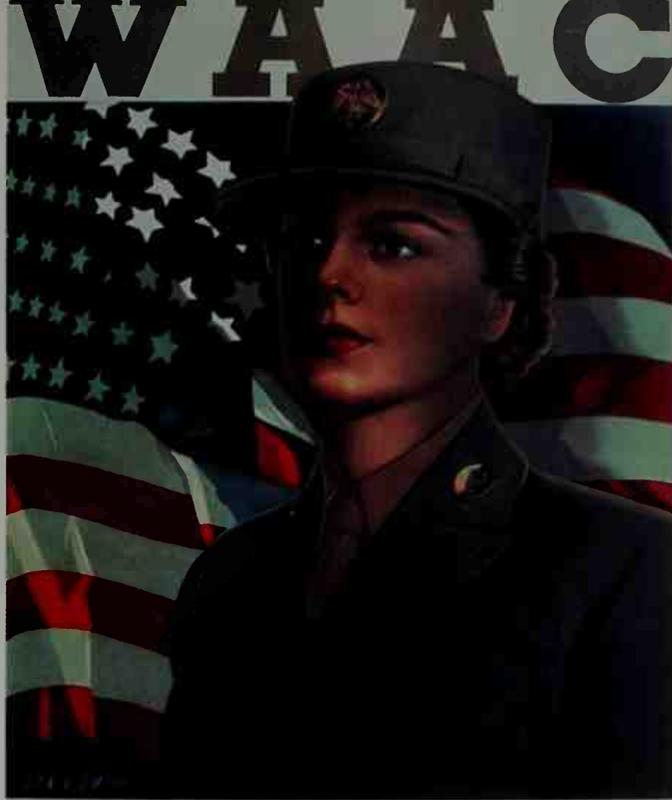
Women in the armed forces wore uniforms and lived in barracks and camps, just like men. They were trained to march and obey orders, though not to fire a gun.

At first, many women were given typically female tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, nursing and secretarial work. But later, women were trained as drivers, mechanics, motorcycle couriers, photographers, and radar operators.

Women serving with the air force were trained in map reading and navigation, so they could track enemy aircraft as they flew across the sky.



*A woman motorcycle rider carries urgent instructions or information to officers at army headquarters.*



**THIS IS MY WAR TOO!**  
**WOMEN'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS**  
**UNITED • STATES • ARMY**

*This image of a patriotic, reliable woman was used to recruit women to the US Army.*

### Help from America

In 1941, after America joined the war, the American government also enlisted women to support their fighting troops. Although American women did not fight on the front line, they were often sent to the war zone shortly after the men. In 1944, Technical Sergeant Mabel Carney won praise as the first American servicewoman to arrive at the battlefields of Normandy after US troops invaded German-occupied France.



### ODETTE

Odette was one of many brave young women who undertook secret missions in wartime Europe. Born in France, she married an Englishman. In 1942, she was recruited by a top-secret branch of the British Army. She traveled secretly to France and worked as a spy, but was captured by German soldiers and sentenced to death. She was tortured, but bravely refused to betray her colleagues. She was imprisoned in a concentration camp, but survived until the end of the war.

### Women pilots

Women also used their expert skills to help the war effort. American pilot Jacqueline Cochran flew a bomber across the Atlantic (an exhausting and dangerous task) and volunteered for service with the British forces. She became an officer in the British Air Transport Auxiliary. This special group flew warplanes from the factories to the air bases. It included many women.

*These women pilots, wearing helmets, goggles and thick coats, are ready to fly aircraft for the Russian Air Force in 1943.*

# Rosie the Riveter—and Friends

“Rosie the Riveter” was a character in an American wartime song, written to encourage women to join the war effort. But most women did not need much encouragement to volunteer. In the USA, nearly half of all women, including mothers of young children, worked during the war. In the UK, nine out of ten single women and eight out of ten married women took part in war work. Once again women proved that they could, like men, carry out heavy, dirty, dangerous tasks.

## Making war machines

In Europe and the USA, war was becoming increasingly technological, and Britain and its allies needed an enormous number of war machines. Women were sent to aircraft factories, engineering plants, chemical and weapons factories. There they cast, cleaned, cut, polished and carefully fitted together the thousands of parts that made up war machinery—from guns and gas masks to planes and tanks.



*She's the girl that makes the thing  
that drills the hole that holds the spring  
That drives the rod that turns the knob  
that works the thingumbob.  
... And it's the girl that makes the thing  
that holds the oil that oils the ring  
That works the thingumbob  
THAT'S GOING TO WIN THE WAR!*

POPULAR BRITISH SONG, 1942



*A woman worker using new skills and precision cutting equipment in a British arms factory.*

## Riveters and welders

As the song (above) suggests, everyone relied on women to do a complicated job, quickly and accurately. In shipyards, women worked as welders, riveters and crane drivers. In bomb factories, they handled dangerous chemicals and assembled delicate electrical equipment like fuses and timers.

*In 1944 this US railroad worker's boss said, "The gals are as good as the men ever were."*

## LAND GIRLS

### Replacing men

As in the First World War, women also did everyday jobs left by men who had gone to war. They drove buses, trains and heavy trucks. They repaired bomb-damaged buildings, worked in factories and small businesses. They worked long hours, sometimes all day and all night, taking short catnaps in restrooms or canteens. Many women with young children also worked.

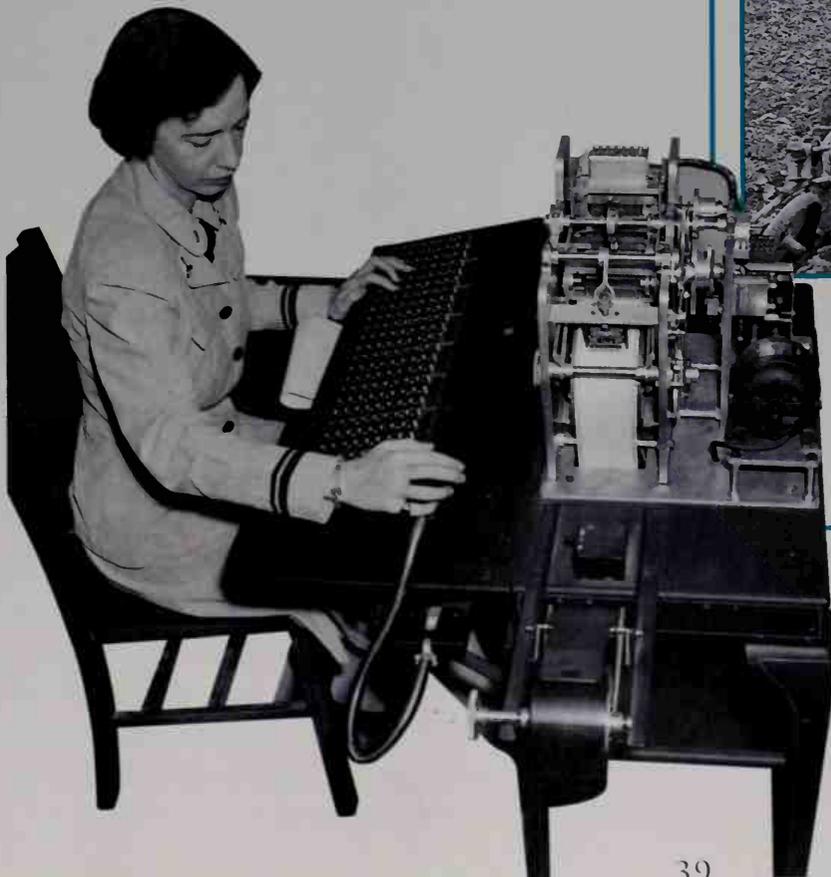
### Working for the government

Some women worked for the government, as administrators, typists and translators. They prepared government advertisements and radio broadcasts. In Britain, a few highly intelligent women were chosen to become part of a team gathering information about the enemy. They listened to enemy radio signals, and helped break the enemy's secret codes.

In Europe and America, there was a shortage of food during the war. The situation was especially bad in Britain, because it usually relied on food imported from overseas. Now enemy battleships patrolled the coasts, so as much food as possible had to be grown at home. In Britain, female farm workers were known as Land Girls. They worked long hours and often ended up sleeping in haylofts or converted cattle sheds. But working outdoors, in noisy, lively all-girl gangs, could be an exciting experience. In the first year of the war 25,000 land girls signed up.



*Besides growing food and caring for animals, Land Girls also learned to drive tractors, handle chemical pesticides and fertilizers and service farm machines.*



*US mathematician Grace Hopper works on an early computer. Women's skill with codes and numbers helped win the war.*

# The Home Front

Women, and all those who stayed at home, were also part of the war. The British government called them the Home Front. Life in Europe was extremely difficult. Bombing destroyed cities, and millions of people fled from the Nazis and became refugees. Millions of Jewish people who could not leave German-occupied lands were killed in death camps.

## Death and destruction

In the Second World War civilians (men, women and children not in the armed forces) suffered almost as much as fighting men. Planes from both sides bombed cities, reducing them to rubble.

*Whatever happened, women had to feed their families. These women look for shops selling food in badly bombed Berlin, Germany, 1944.*



*I shop with special care. I waste nothing ... I try to keep myself and my house trim and cheerful. I take special pains with cooking because I know this keeps the men's spirits up. Though I may not win medals, I am certainly helping to win the war.*

BRITISH HOUSEWIFE, INTERVIEWED IN WARTIME

## Living with bombs

Women and children saw their homes destroyed and their neighbors killed. Often they remained homeless for years. Faced with the nightly threat of bombs, women did their best to protect their families. In big cities, many families left their homes and went to sleep in huge public shelters.



*Children being evacuated from London in 1939 to avoid being bombed. Many would not see their families again for several years.*

## Evacuees

Some parents decided to send their children away from home, for safety. Thousands of Jewish children were sent from mainland Europe to Britain and America, to escape persecution. Many never saw their parents again. In Britain, the government evacuated children from cities into the countryside. Women in quiet country areas took city children into their homes.



*Soldiers drew glamorous images of women on warships, tanks and planes. The pictures reminded them of wives and girlfriends back home.*

### **Make do and mend**

Feeding and clothing a family was difficult. Many foods—such as meat, fish, sugar, eggs and butter—were rationed, and fresh fruit was hard to find. Fuel, clothes and cleaning materials were also rationed. Women were encouraged to make do and mend, for example, by making slippers out of old felt hats, or unraveling spare woolen sweaters to knit warm blankets or children's clothes.

### **The end of the war**

By the time the Second World War ended in 1945, many women's lives had changed forever. They had lived through hardship, shortage and stress. They had done hard, dangerous work and learned new skills. They had lost loved ones. Now they faced an uncertain future. What would the postwar world be like?

### **History repeats itself**

To older women, who had been alive in 1918, history seemed to be repeating itself in 1945. As men came back home from fighting overseas, women were asked to give up their wartime work. Married women were encouraged to stay at home. Unmarried women were expected to take less responsible, low-paid jobs. In spite of women's wartime efforts, their legal situation had hardly changed at all. Women were still not equal with men.

## **WARTIME FASHION**

Wartime clothes for women were short and simple, to use as little fabric as possible. Often they resembled men's uniforms, creating the impression that women were in the services, too. Popular hairstyles were given fighting names, such as the victory roll. Makeup and stockings (pantyhose were not yet worn) were in very short supply, so women improvised, staining their lips with berries, and using crayons for eye makeup. They drew seams in black crayon up the back of their legs to look like stockings. For the first time, it was acceptable for women to wear pants in public. They were warm and practical.

*British wartime fashions in 1942. Sensible, heavy shoes, short skirts, and jackets looked like army uniforms.*



# WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT

## Women in Media and the Arts

For many centuries, women had painted, sung, written poems, letters and diaries, and sewn beautiful clothes. But it was only after 1900 that a career in the media or the arts became acceptable for a woman. Here are just a few of the many women who won praise and fame—and sometimes made their fortunes—from these new careers.

### Ida Wells Barnett (1862–1931)

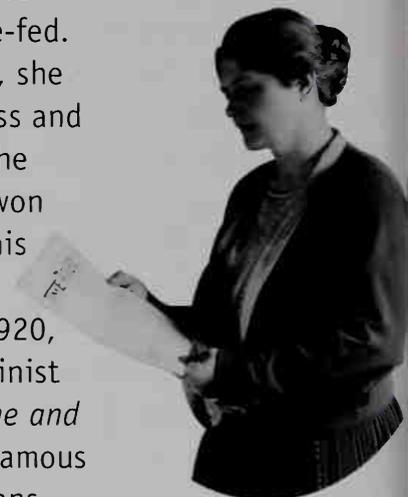
Born a slave, and orphaned at the age of 14, Barnett became one of America's most outspoken journalists. At first she worked as a teacher, but lost her job when she complained about the way African Americans—including herself—were treated. She worked on newspapers in Memphis, New York and Chicago, and led campaigns against lynching—the murder of black men by gangs of white people who accused them unjustly of crimes. In 1909, she was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a leading civil rights organization in the United States.



Marian Anderson

### Lady Rhondda (Margaret Haig Thomas) (1883–1958)

Daughter of a wealthy businessman, Haig Thomas was a strong supporter of the suffragettes in the UK. She took part in demonstrations, was imprisoned and force-fed. After her father died, she took over his business and ran it successfully. She also fought for and won the right to inherit his title and sit in the House of Lords. In 1920, she founded the feminist weekly magazine *Time and Tide*, inviting many famous thinkers and politicians to write for it.



### Marian Anderson (1897–1993)

Born into a poor family in Philadelphia, Anderson started singing in church when she was 6 years old. In 1925, she won first prize in an international singing competition; this led to a concert tour of Europe, and worldwide fame. But, because she was black, Anderson was barred from one of America's most famous venues, Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. Her outraged fans arranged an alternative concert for her instead. It was a great success.

### **Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (1883–1971)**

Chanel (right) came from a poor farming family in France. Her parents died when she was very young, so she lived with an older sister. They survived by working for a hatmaker. Chanel learned fast, and opened a hat shop of her own in 1912. After the First World War, she moved to Paris, and began to make clothes for rich women. Her designs soon became popular. They were based on casual, simple shapes and used stretchy knitted fabrics that were flattering and easy to wear. By the late 1930s, she was the wealthiest fashion designer in France.



### **Mary Pickford (1893–1979)**

Born in Toronto, Canada, Pickford worked as a child actor on the stage. She made her first film at 16, and soon became Hollywood's most popular female star. Because she was young and pretty, people called her the nation's sweetheart, but she was also an intelligent businesswoman. In 1916, Pickford set up her own film company, because she preferred to be independent of the big studios' control. In 1919, she and three others formed United Artists; it became one of the most powerful film-making companies in the world. Pickford won an Academy Award ("Oscar") as best actress in 1929, and retired a few years later. In 1975 she was given a special award to honor her unique contributions to the film industry.

### **Kathe Kollwitz (1867–1945)**

The daughter of a left-wing preacher and the wife of a doctor, German artist Kollwitz used her powerful art to help people in distress. Her black-and-white prints and sculptures were designed to show the miserable lives led by many poor people. She was opposed to war, and many of her finest works are about wartime grief and death. She designed a war memorial to her son, who was killed in the First World War. In 1928 she was elected professor at the Prussian (North German) Academy. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Kollwitz was forced to resign, but she still kept working at home. She was killed in a bombing raid during the Second World War.



### **Anne Frank (1930–1945)**

Frank was born in Germany to a Jewish family. When the Nazis gained power the Franks left Germany to live in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Anne lived an ordinary life until the Nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1941. The Frank family went into hiding in tiny rooms behind their warehouse. Neighbors risked their lives to bring them food secretly. Frank kept a private diary, which she hid in her room. In 1944, the family was betrayed to the Nazis and taken away to concentration camps, where Anne, aged 15, died of disease. After the war ended, Anne Frank's diary was discovered and published. It is still read today as one of the most tragic reminders of the horror of war.

# Women pioneers

After 1900, pioneering women worked to change the world in many ways. Some made important new discoveries; some campaigned for health and welfare; some followed exciting new careers.

## Alexandra David-Neel (1869–1968)

David-Neel spent her early years in Paris, where she became fascinated by East Asian objects in museums. In 1888, she inherited money, and used this to visit India and North Africa. At that time, very few European women traveled there alone. In 1911, her husband gave her more money for traveling, and she studied languages and religions in India and Tibet. She journeyed in dangerous, remote mountain regions, unknown to Europeans. She spent a whole winter in a mountain cave with Buddhist nuns, and three years in a monastery in Beijing. In 1923, in disguise, she became the first European woman to enter the “forbidden” city of Lhasa, in Tibet. She wrote many books about her travels, and finally returned to Europe in 1936.



Annie Jump Cannon  
(right) with Caroline  
E. Furness.

*Had I been a man I might have explored the Poles or climbed Mount Everest, but as it was, my spirit found outlet in the air ...*

AMY JOHNSON, PIONEER AVIATOR

## Daisy Bates (1861–1951)

Born in London, Bates worked with the Aboriginal people of Australia to fight for their rights. Europeans did not understand the Aboriginals' culture or lifestyle, and wished to destroy them.

Bates spent 35 years living as a nomad, alongside Aboriginal families. In 1935, she wrote about the fast-disappearing Aboriginal way of life, so that it would not be forgotten. She went on campaigning until she was 85.



## Annie Jump Cannon (1863–1941)

Cannon was born in Delaware, and received a good education at two leading women's colleges. In 1896, she took a job as an astronomer at Harvard Observatory, where she worked for the rest of her life. Her task was to help compile a photographic catalog of all the known stars. Cannon developed a system for examining star photographs, which became used by most other astronomers worldwide. She was appointed senior astronomer at the observatory in 1938. She was one of the few women elected to the American Philosophical Society.

### **Irene Joliot-Curie (1897–1956)**

Daughter of Marie Curie, one of the world's most famous scientists, Joliot-Curie was an outstanding researcher in radioactivity and a professor at one of the top French universities. In 1935, she won the Nobel Prize, the world's highest scientific award. Joliot-Curie also spent time away from the laboratory. She was opposed to fascism, and became a member of the antifascist French government in 1936. She supported many feminist causes, and argued that women should have the right to join the French Academy of Sciences—the association of leading scientific scholars. Joliot-Curie used her expert knowledge to help the French government develop nuclear power. But she was opposed to nuclear weapons and campaigned for world peace.

*Bessie Coleman*



### **Bessie Coleman (1893–1926)**

Coleman was born to poor parents in Atlanta, Texas. She was the first woman to qualify for an international pilot's license. But, because she was black, American flying schools would not accept her and she had to go to Europe to take the pilot's exams. During the First World War, she worked in France for the Red Cross. When the war was over, French Army pilots taught her to fly. She returned to the USA in 1922 to earn her living by giving flying demonstrations. She died in a flying accident when she was only 33.

### **Maria Montessori (1870–1952)**

Montessori was the first Italian woman to qualify as a doctor, in 1894. She then worked with children with learning difficulties, and saw how they learned by exploring the world around them. From 1907 on, Montessori used her observations to develop a new way of teaching, based on children's natural curiosity. She encouraged learning through play. It was a revolutionary change from the usual teaching methods of that time. Many people thought Montessori's way of teaching would not work, but it was a great success with all children. She traveled around the world, telling people about her ideas. She set up colleges to train teachers. Today, there are Montessori schools and colleges in many countries.

### **Amelia Earhart (1898–1937)**

Born into a lawyer's family in Kansas, Earhart planned to be doctor. But after she was offered a trial flight at an air show, she decided to change careers and become a pilot. She felt sure that flying would give women independence and new ways of earning money. In 1928 Earhart achieved worldwide fame by becoming the first woman to cross the Atlantic by plane, as navigator to a male pilot. Earhart soon set many other records, including the first nonstop flight from Hawaii to California. In 1932 she flew solo across the Atlantic. In 1937, Earhart was flying the last quarter of a record-breaking flight around the world when her plane disappeared over the Pacific. It has never been found.



# GLOSSARY

**aboriginals** The original inhabitants of a country.

**barracks** A building where soldiers live.

**bereavement** Feelings of sadness because someone has died.

**Bolsheviks** Members of a Russian political party who demanded revolution. After the second revolution in Russia in 1917, they formed the first Communist government.

**boycott** To refuse to have anything to do with somebody or something, as a protest against a policy or injustice.

**campaign** An organized group of activities, such as speeches or marches, designed to change people's views or to win new rights.

**career** A job with opportunities for progress, training, more responsibility and more pay.

**civil rights** The rights that allow an ordinary person to play a full part in society, such as the rights to vote, to receive an education, to have a job and to follow their own religious faith.

**communists** People who believe in a system of government in which there is no private property. Instead, the government owns and runs everything on behalf of the people.

**concentration camp** Place where thousands of people, especially Jews, were imprisoned in terrible conditions by the Nazis. Most prisoners were killed.

**congressman/congresswoman** Member of Congress, the national lawmaking assembly of the USA. It is made up of two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

**conscripted** Made by law to join the armed forces.

**conservative** Wanting to preserve the way things are and opposed to changing them.

**constitution** The ideas and principles by which a country is governed. Some countries, such as the USA, have a written constitution.

**demonstration** A public protest.

**economic** Having to do with the management of money.

**equality** The same rights and opportunities for all members of a group or society; equal treatment based on respect.

**evacuated** Moved out of a dangerous area to a place that is thought to be safer.

**evacuees** People who have been evacuated, especially in a war.

**family planning** Deciding how many children to have, and when to have them, usually by using contraception or other forms of birth control.

**fascism** A political theory based on beliefs in a strong leader and on the right of the state to control all aspects of people's lives.

**left-wing** Having radical, socialist views.

**liberals** People who hold tolerant views on a wide range of issues.

**Liberty Bond** A bond issued by the US government to raise money to fight the First World War.

**living standard** The way in which people can afford to live.

**militants** People with aggressive, outspoken attitudes, especially when supporting a cause.

**minister** A person in charge of a department of the government.

**piecework** A system of producing goods where a worker is paid for each finished item.

**racial discrimination** Treating people unfairly because of their skin color or race.

**rationed** Shared out in fixed amounts. During the Second World War, many kinds of food, fuel and clothing were rationed.

**Red Cross** A voluntary organization that provides emergency medical help to anyone in need.

**republicans** People who want their country to be ruled by a government elected by ordinary citizens and not ruled by a king or queen.

**revolution** A rebellion that overthrows a government.

**revolutionary** Someone who wants to bring about big changes in society or government, often by force.

**right-wing** Having mostly conservative (see above) political views.

**riveter** Worker who joins metal plates together.

**senator** Member of the US Senate.

**settlements** Community centers offering help and advice to poor people.

**status** Rank; position in society.

**share** A certificate giving the right of ownership of a small part of a company.

**stock market** Place where shares are bought and sold.

**strike** When workers refuse to work, as a protest.

**suffrage** The right to vote in political elections. A suffragist believed in using only peaceful means to campaign to extend the right to vote to women.

**suffragettes** Nickname for women who used militant tactics to fight for the right to vote; members of the WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union).

**sweatshop** A crowded, unhealthy workshop.

**tactics** Plans and schemes used to achieve a purpose.

**trade union** A group of workers who have joined together to demand better pay and working conditions for their members.

**unemployment** Being without a job.

**voluntary work** Work offered freely, and done without payment.

**volunteer** Someone who works for no pay.

**welders** Workers who join two pieces of metal together by using heat and/or pressure.

**welfare** A person's health and well-being.

**welfare benefits** Money from government or charity given to people in need.

**White House** The official home of the President of the United States.

#### FURTHER READING

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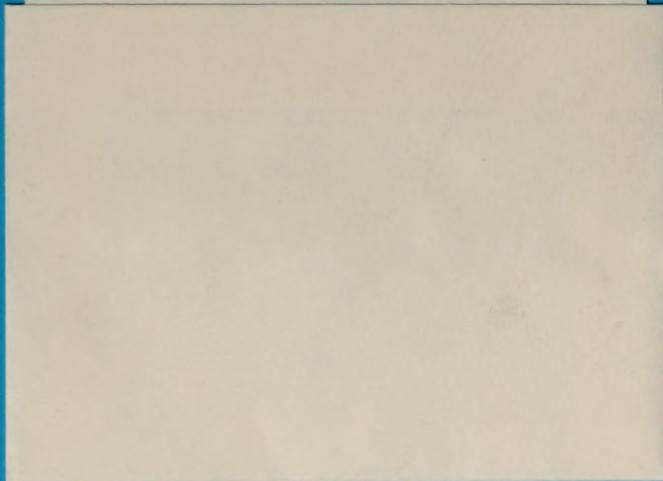
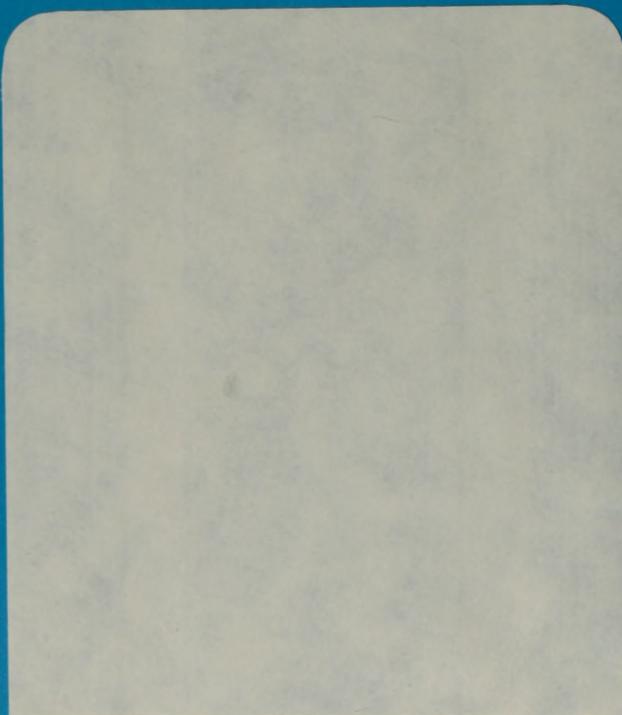
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